



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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JURY CONVICTS FORMER STUDENT OF HACKING INTO U.T. COMPUTER SYSTEM

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton announced tonight that a federal jury in Austin, Texas, found Christopher Andrew Phillips guilty of accessing protected computers without authorization, a.k.a. computer hacking, and possession of stolen Social Security numbers.

"Computer hackers who steal tens of thousands of social security numbers are not pranksters, but criminals who turn the lives of innocent people upside down. Often the damage caused by this type of crime is difficult to undo and is extremely costly. Tonight's verdict is a big victory for the 45,000 victims whose information was stolen and the University of Texas," stated United States Attorney Johnny Sutton.

After deliberating for approximately five hours beginning this afternoon, the jury found that in January, February and April 2002, Phillips attempted to breach the security of hundreds of computer systems including the University of Texas' web-based computer system. University officials and others detected Phillips' actions and University officials subsequently warned him not to further attempt to breach any computer security system. On January 30, 2003, Phillips created a new computer program to breach the security of or "hack into" a protected University of Texas computer system that he did not have authorized access to in order to discover the names and social security numbers of individuals in the UT computer system. He subsequently used this computer program to steal over 37,000 names and social security numbers of individuals in the University of Texas computers via the TXCLASS system. In doing this, he caused massive failures that shut down the TXCLASS computer system as well as the UT system's web-based server and all of its applications. Previously, in 2002, Phillips was successful in stealing approximately 8,000 names and Social Security numbers from the University's system. As a result of these damages, the University suffered losses of approximately \$122,000 and another \$60,000 in losses was incurred by UT to warn individuals whose names and social security numbers were stolen by Phillips about potential identity theft.

Testimony during the trial also revealed that in October and November 2002, Phillips downloaded biographical data from an Internet Web site providing genealogical information of individuals born during the years 1940 to 1984 including name, date of birth, gender, father's name, mother's maiden name, and place of birth of the ten most populous Texas counties. Phillips admitted that he was going to merge the genealogical data with the stolen information from the UT system to create a single data base. Phillips was acquitted on two counts of possession of more than 15 access devices with the intent to defraud.

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As a result of his conviction, Phillips faces up to six years in federal prison. No sentencing has been scheduled. This case was investigated by the United States Secret Service and the University of Texas ITS Information Security Office. Assistant United States Attorneys Mark Roomberg and Don Calvert are prosecuting this case on behalf of the Government.

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